

The Four Horses of the Apocalypse

By Rich Jacobs, MD

*Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine." When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth. **Revelation 6:1-8, NASB***

1. The verses of **Revelation 6:1-8**, describes events that initiate the "end times". Several points should be noted.
 - a. The "seals" prevent the scroll that John saw from being opened. When Revelation is read, one sees that this scroll contains the wrath of God, as expressed in the Trumpet Judgments (**Revelation 8-11**).
 - b. Christ Himself, as the "Lamb", breaks the seals to unleash to consequences of each broken seal. Christ is not yet revealed in His Second Coming as a conquering King in these verses. (Look at **Revelation 19:11-16ff**, for a far different picture of Christ.)
 - c. Each horse is ordered forth by one of the angelic beings around God's throne that make up the "four living creatures". The word translated in the NASB as "Come" is a command (in the Greek imperative tense).
 - d. I do not believe these horses are just symbolic. **Zechariah 6:5** says they are "spirits of heaven".
 - i. Evidently, they are angelic creatures. Their presence on earth initiates the events of **Revelation 6**.
 - ii. Each horse carries a rider, but it is uncertain if these are different riders or the same rider on each horse.
2. The first spirit is a like a white horse. The word translated as "white" can also mean "bright".
 - a. The rider is wearing a crown. This is a type of laurel or wreath that is won through victory rather than the crown worn by royalty.
 - b. The intention of this rider is to conquer, so he goes forth conquering.
 - c. The rider carries a bow, but not arrows. Perhaps this means that his early conquests are achieved diplomatically, rather than by open warfare.
 - d. Although this rider sits on a white horse, like Christ, as is seen in **Revelation 19:11-13**, I do not believe he is the Lord.
 - i. He is sent forth BY Christ.
 - ii. He appears to be a "righteous" Christ-like figure, but he is not.
 - iii. I think this person is Antichrist.

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- iv. From other scripture, I conjecture that this rider's early diplomatic accomplishments may include
 - (1) Bringing all the disparate Muslim nations, factions, parties, and interests under a caliphate under his sole control. Zechariah provides some hints that lead me to believe the Muslim nations are involved in this (more on this later).
 - (2) Conjecture: this may require ending the power and reign of Muslim terrorists to bring the illusion of peaceful intentions.
 - (3) Negotiating a peace treaty between Israel and the Muslim nations he represents and controls. This is only possible if Antichrist speaks for all the contending Muslim nations that he must unite.
 - (4) Allowing Israel to rebuild her Temple and resume her priestly sacrificial duties in Jerusalem, possibly in exchange for establishing a seemingly peaceful Palestinian homeland. (See **Daniel 9:24-27**).
 - (5) Conjecture: It is possible that this leader, who will seem to be a peacemaker, will receive the backing and support of NATO, including the United States, and others.
3. The second spirit is like a "red horse". The Greek word translated "red" could also mean "fiery", denoting the nature of this spirit. This spirit initiates a type of conflagration in world events characterized by people killing other people -- perhaps, even open warfare.
 - a. The rider of the second horse-spirit initiates large scale killing leading to the death of many people. Notice his "great sword" - which is really a short cutting dagger. Is this war or mass executions?
 - b. It is possible that the diplomatic peace achieved by antichrist will be end when he breaks the treaty or covenant between his "kingdom" and Israel. See my comments in **Daniel 9:27**, below. The result will be open warfare that defeats Israel, threatens the extermination of Jews and later, Christians.

*"And he will make a firm covenant with the many (i.e. a treaty with many nations and peoples) for one week (i.e. seven years), but in the middle of the week (i.e. three and a half years after the treaty) he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering (i.e. in the rebuilt Jewish Temple); and on the wing of abominations (i.e. he will claim to be Christ and demand worship) will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction (i.e. the destructive events of the seals, trumpets, and bowls of Revelation), one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." **Daniel 9:27, NASB***

Please also see **Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12** for more details about the events listed in Daniel 9.)

4. The third spirit is like a black horse, which also carries the "rider".
 - a. The dark or black horse may be a spirit who brings famine, although these passages may also refer to extreme price inflation.
 - i. A small "cup" of wheat or portion of barley costs an entire day's wages (*i.e.* a denarius). The implication is that people's daily earnings will barely feed them.
 - ii. The scales are used to regulate the trading of money for food. Notice that the rider himself holds the scales! He controls them!

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- iii. I believe this verse might refer to the “rider’s” (? Antihrist) tight regulation of trade.
 - (1) Only people who swear allegiance to Antichrist and receive his mark will be able to freely trade (**Revelation 13: 14-18**).
 - (2) Perhaps, everyone else will be forced to buy food and services at inflated prices on the black market (?)
- b. Notice that “luxury goods”, like oil and wine, are not impacted. Perhaps the wealthy will remain well off?
5. The fourth spirit is said to be an “ashen horse”. The word “*ashen*” is from the Greek word, “*Chloros*”, which means pale green (we get the word “chlorine” from this Greek word).
 - a. We know the name of the rider; it is Death! I believe this is Satan himself (see **Hebrews 2:14** and **Revelation 2: 10**. Perhaps Antichrist (the rider) become possessed by Satan (“Death”) at this point.
 - b. The forces of Hell (Hades) follow this rider. This could be the demonic kingdom that is exiled to earth, along with Satan, when Michael and the angels defeats them (see **Revelation 12:1-13**)
 - c. This horse-spirit unleashes chaos, disease, pestilence, and death to its regions.
 - d. Notice several things about this rider
 - i. He is given his authority, presumably by God.
 - ii. He has direct authority over only one-quarter of the earth. I believe this could be the Muslim world because of what is written in **Zechariah 6**. Also, the Muslim nations comprise a land area of about 9 million miles. This is about one-quarter of the habitable earth. The Muslim population also approximates about one-quarter of the earth’s population. Many prophetic verses in **Ezekiel, Isaiah, & Daniel** identify Muslim nations for God’s condemnation.
 - iii. His regional kingdom is centered on Israel and the Middle East, according the **Zechariah 6**. The Muslim world around Israel approximates the Eastern Roman Empire, which is consistent with the revelations found in **Daniel 2**.

*Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses. Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these, my lord?” The angel replied to me, “These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth, with one of which the black horses are going forth to the north country; and the white ones go forth after them, while the dappled ones go forth to the south country. “When the strong ones went out, they I were eager to go to patrol the earth.” And He said, “Go, patrol the earth.” So they patrolled the earth. Then He cried out to me and spoke to me saying, “See, those who are going to the land of the north have appeased My wrath in the land of the north.” **Zechariah 6:1-5, NASB***

6. Beyond their immediate application, these verses are clearly set in an end-times context. **Zechariah 5** even features the scroll of **Revelation 5ff**.
 - a. Notice the four colored horse spirits - red, black, white, and “strong dappled”.
 - b. The order of the horses in **Zechariah** is not given -- only that four colored horse spirits arise.

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- c. The colors and number of these horses matches those of **Revelation 6**. The word in Zechariah is “dappled”, which is translated from the Hebrew word “*barod*”. This word means “spotted” or “hail”, as if spotted by hail. (*Note: Hail is sometimes symbolic of judgment*). This horse-spirit seems to correspond to the “chloros”, or “pale”, horse of **Revelation 6**. (John and Zechariah appear to be struggling to describe this fourth horse. It appears to be a sickly, non-uniformly color.)
 - d. These horse-spirits fan out to cover all the “land” (Hebrew: *eretz*), which I believe is the land of Israel. (The NASB translates *eretz* as “earth”, but this is interpretive.
 - e. The NASB says the spirit-horses “patrol” the land, but the Hebrew merely says they “travel” or “walk”.
 - f. The horse-spirits then travel north and south of Israel into the surrounding regions around “the land”. These are Muslim nations that include Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, *etc.*
 - g. In Zechariah’s vision, the horses pull chariots, which were instruments of war. The rider of **Revelation** would be the driver of the chariots in **Zechariah**. In any event, presumably the horses do the man’s bidding or the man must go where the horses take him.
 - h. All the horse-spirits emerge from between two bronze mountains.
 - i. Mountains symbolize governments in scripture. The Mountain of the Lord refers to Mount Zion, Christ’s place of earthly government.
 - ii. Bronze is an alloy of copper and another metal, often tin, but sometimes even arsenic. Bronze often symbolizes sin in the Bible because it is an impure metal.
 - iii. These two bronze mountains probably represent worldly political and/or military powers. They shield and guide the horse-spirits to their destinations. This is speculation, but I think world powers initially will support and direct the actions of the “rider”, whom they may believe is a peacemaker, at first.
7. In summary, I believe the horses of **Revelation** are also the horses of Zechariah.
- a. I believe the “rider” is the coming Antichrist. He is “released” by the powers of Heaven with Christ’s consent.
 - b. The horse-spirits initiate the events of the first several years of the last 7 years of this era, just before Christ returns to redeem Israel and establish His earthly Kingdom
 - c. These horse-spirits are spirits with whom the “rider” cooperates. They represent actions that appear to be taken by the “leader”. These actions include
 - i. A regional consolidation of power and authority secured by the “rider” through conquest, possibly without war.
 - ii. The execution and murder of many people under the direction of the “rider”
 - iii. Scarce food and stables goods for many people because of economic control exerted by the rider.
 - iv. A breakdown in civil order resulting in disease, pestilence, a loss of civilization, and widespread misery and death.

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- d. It is possible that the calamities of the first four seals will be blamed on the Church because the 5th Seal represents the persecution and martyrdom of the saints.